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TO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: TGEN, EFIS, MILI, BEXP, VS

SUBJ: HERBICIDES: ALLEGED POISONING OF VN SEAFOOD

PRODUCTS BY DIOXIN

REF: SAIGON 7499

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE " HARVARD REPORT" IS A PAPER
PRODUCED BY BAUGHMAN AND MESELSON OF HARVARD GIVEN
APRIL 2 IN NORTH CAROLINA ON AN ANALYTICAL METHOD FOR
DETECTING DIOXIN. USING VERY FEW SAMPLES COLLECTED IN
1970 NEAR AREAS OF SOUTH VIET NAM, HEAVILY EXPOSED TO
2,4,5- T, LEVELS OF DIOXIN WERE DETECTED RANGING FROM
18 TO 800 PARTS PER TRILLION WITH MEASUREMENTS VARYING
PLUS AND MINUS 25 . NO EVIDENCE WAS PRESENTED ON THE
EFFECTS OF DIOXIN ON HUMANS. THE WORK IN THIS REPORT
IS NOT KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN STUDIED OR REPRODUCED BY ANY
OTHER SCIENTISTS- PROFESSOR HO' S HEADLINE HUNTING APPEARS
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UNFOUNDED AND MOST UNFORTUNATE. REPORT POUCHED TO POSTS.
END SUMMARY.

2. "HARVARD RESEARCH REPORT" ASSUMED TO BE INDEPENDENT
PAPER BY ROBERT BAUGHMAN AND MATTHEW MESELSON OF HARVARD
PRESENTED APRIL 2, 1973 AT CONFERENCE HELD AT RESEARCH
TRIANGLE PARK, NORTH CAROLINA. TITLE OF PAPER IS "AN
ANALYTICAL METHOD FOR DETECTING DIOXIN". THE AUTHORS
CLAIM THAT A PROCEDURE HAS BEEN DEVELOPED FOR RELIABLE

DETECTION OF DIOXIN IN ANIMAL TISSUES DOWN TO LEVELS
APPROACHING ONE PART PER TRILLION (PPT) (10 EXPONENT
MINUS 12). THE PROCEDURE MAKES USE OF CHEMICAL CLEAN-UP,
PREPARATIVE GAS- LIQUID CHROMATOGRAPHY AND ANALYSIS BY
TIME AVERAGED HIGH RESOLUTION MASS SPECTROSCOPY. THEY
STATE THAT A VERY LIMITED NUMBER OF FISH AND CRUSTACEAN
SAMPLES WERE COLLECTED IN SOUTH VIETNAM IN 1970 NEAR
AREAS EXPOSED TO THE HERBICIDE, 2,4,5- T AND THAT
DIOXIN WAS DETECTED USING THEIR NEW PROCEDURE IN THESE
SAMPLES AT LEVELS RANGING FROM 18 TO 814 (PPT) WITH
MEASUREMENTS VARYING PLUS AND MINUS 25. THE REPORT
NOTES THAT CONSIDERING THE LIMITED NUMBER OF SAMPLES
ANALYZED AND THE FACT THAT THEY WERE COLLECTED 2 1/2
YEARS AGO, IT DOES NOT SEEM APPROPRIATE TO ATTEMPT IN
THE WORK OF THE REPORT ANY DETAILED EVALUATION OF THE
TOXICOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESULTS OF DEVELOPING
THE ANALYTICAL PROCEDURE. THE REPORT IS NOT A STUDY
OF DIOXIN IN SOUTH VIETNAM SEAFOOD, BUT A REPORT ON AN
ANALYTICAL PROCEDURE FOR DETECTING DIOXIN TO LEVELS OF
ONE PART PER TRILLION. THE PROCEDURE IS NOT KNOWN TO
HAVE BEEN STUDIED OR REPRODUCED BY ANY OTHER SCIENTIST
AND THE AUTHORS CLAIM NO NEW SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE ABOUT
DIOXIN IN ANIMAL TISSUE OR ITS EFFECT ON HUMAN BEINGS.
IT WOULD APPEAR THAT PROFESSOR HO HAD INDULGED IN
UNFORTUNATE HEADLINE HUNTING BY MISREPRESENTING THE
RESULTS OF A TWO- MAN TECHNICAL REPORT.

3. THE FEW SAMPLES OF PRAWN WERE COLLECTED IN AUGUST
AND SEPTEMBER 1970 FROM LOCAL FISHERMAN NEAR, THE
SAI GON RIVER AND AT THE CAN GIO VILLAGE. THESE
SPECIMENS AVERAGED 30 PPT OF DIOXIN BASED ON WET BODY
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WEIGHT. THE REPORT INCLUDES DATA ON LEVELS OF DIOXIN
GIVING VARIOUS BIOLOGICAL EFFECTS: LETHALITY - FOR
FEMALE RATS A SINGLE ORAL DOSE FOR LD50 45,000 PPT,
MALE RATS 23,000 PPT; AND MALE GUINEA PIG 600 PPT.
TERATOGENICITY - CLEFT PALATE IN MICE, DAILY ORAL DOSE,
5,000 PPT; INTESTINAL HEMORRHAGE IN RATS, DAILY ORAL
DOSE 125-500 PPT, EDEMA AND DEATH IN CHICKEN EMBRYO,

SINGLE INJECTION 20 PPT.

4. TO DATE, INCLUDING THE WORK OF THE NAS COMMITTEE ON EFFECTS OF HERBICIDES IN VIET NAM, NO KNOWN EFFECT OF DIOXIN ON HUMANS HAS BEEN RECORDED.

5. FYI: WE UNDERSTAND THAT MESELSON COLLECTED HUMAN MILK SAMPLES DURING HIS 1970 TOUR OF SOUTH VIET NAM AND HE IS CURRENTLY ANALYZING THESE AND MAY SOON REPORT ON THIS MATTER. WE WILL TRY TO KEEP YOU INFORMED TO THE

FULLEST EXTENT OF OUR KNOWLEDGE.

6. REPORT BEING POUCHED TO EMBASSY SAIGON AND TO EMBASSY TOKYO FOR INFORMATION AND USE.

7. A UPI REPORT BY BARNEY SEIBERT OF MAY 1 REPORTS THAT A JAPANESE CABINET MINISTER ANNOUNCED THAT HE IMPOUNDED 24 TONS OF FROZEN SHRIMP FROM SOUTH VIETNAM PENDING SCIENTIFIC TESTS.

8. ACTION REQUESTED:

A. EMBASSY TOKYO REQUESTED TO DETERMINE WHETHER ANY VIETNAMESE SHRIMP WERE IN FACT IMPOUNDED. IF THEY WERE, PLEASE PROVIDE, AT YOUR DISCRETION, THE JAPANESE WITH THE INFORMATION ABOVE. YOU MAY ALSO WISH TO INFORM THE JAPANESE THAT THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES HAS BEEN STUDYING THE EFFECTS OF THE HERBICIDE PROGRAMS IN VIETNAM SINCE 1970. WE WOULD IMMEDIATELY PROVIDE THE JAPANESE AND ANY OTHER INTERESTED PARTY WITH RELIABLE INFORMATION WHICH COULD INDICATE A DANGEROUS CONCENTRATION OF TOXIC SUBSTANCE PRODUCED IN FOOD PRODUCTS BY HERBICIDE PROGRAMS IN VIETNAM. TO DATE, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WE HAVE NO SUCH INFORMATION. THE NAS STUDY SHOULD BE FINISHED LATER IN THE YEAR.

B. EMBASSY SAIGON IS REQUESTED TO PROVIDE APPROPRIATE GVN OFFICIALS WITH THE INFORMATION IN THIS CABLE. WE HAVE DISCUSSED THE MATTER WITH THE RVN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, ROGERS

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